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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: SESSION TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT ADJOURNED TO
NOVEMBER 30

¶1. (SBU) On November 23, the Lebanese Parliament failed to elect a new president, even with the looming expiration of President Lahoud's extended mandate, which expires on midnight of November 23. Some 109 parliamentarians of 127 showed up in Parliament, but only 66 parliamentarians were present inside the Chamber. The session was quickly adjourned, and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri announced that another session was scheduled for November 30.

¶2. (U) Deputy Speaker of Parliament Farid Makkari, on behalf of the March 14 alliance, read a prepared statement in which he indicated that the majority is "committed to the requirements of national stability and will neither take a position that will threaten stability nor will it give up on its constitutional right to elect a new president." He also indicated that a boycott of the session would represent a clear violation of the Constitution.

¶3. (SBU) Prior to the postponement of the session, majority leader MP Saad Hariri and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt met separately with Speaker Berri at his office. This is the first meeting between Jumblatt and Berri for more than a year. Minister of Information Ghazi Aridi, a Jumblatt ally, told us that the meeting was brief and the discussion focused on preserving the security and stability of the country. Following the meeting Jumblatt made a public statement which emphasized consensus and expressed his commitment to the Lebanese Constitution.
FELTMAN